

Lockport Historic District
Bounded by: 8th, Hamilton, 11th Streets
and the Illinois and Michigan Canal
Lockport, Illinois
Will County

HAER No. IL-16

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

LOCKPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT

IL-16

Date: Buildings constructed between ca. 1838 and 1917.

Location: Bounded by 8th, Hamilton, and 11th Streets and the Illinois and Michigan Canal.

Designed by: Various

Owners: Various

Significance: The Village of Lockport was first established in 1836 by the surveyors of the Illinois and Michigan Canal to serve as field headquarters and as a supply point. As the 19th century progressed, Lockport became a major commercial and grain milling center. For many years the canal was the major transportation route to Chicago from the south, but its importance declined after construction of the railroads. Many of the buildings in the historic district were re-constructed following a major fire in 1895. The district retains a high proportion of late 19th century structures, which have not been substantially altered since their construction.

Researchers are referred to a Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service report for proposals developed for historic preservation and recreation opportunities (U.S. Department of the Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. Lockport, Illinois: An HCRS Project Report. HCRS Publication No. 35. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979).

Historian: Richard Helliger, with research assistance from John Lamb, 1979.

Transmitted by: Monica E. Hawley, Historian, 1984.

LOCKPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT

Lockport developed in a region where woodland and prairie meet. Those two forms of vegetation are divided by the Des Plaines River which runs in a southerly direction. Away from the river bottom, the elevation rises to bluffs beyond which are table lands or broad rolling prairies. West of the valley begins the prairie which, from this point, stretches almost one thousand miles to the north and west. Before the European settlement of the region altered its natural rhythm, the prairie would burn at least once a year. The fires found so threatening and destructive to early settlers, always terminated at the west rim of the Des Plaines River Valley. The east bank was the site of the first settlements, as it was found safe from fire, abundant in wood (which provided building materials, fire wood, and natural protection from the elements) and had a number of clear brooks running nearby. The region was also a popular place to roam well before settlement of Europeans. The Will County Gazeteer of 1860 suggests:

From the observations of the first white settlers in this vicinity, it is evident that what is now Lockport had long been a favorite resort of the Indian tribes which had occupied this section of the country. The spreading oaks, the clear running brooks, the rapid river, all made this one of the brightest spots in this paradise of the red man. Here their graves are found, their caches, or places for hiding their corn, etc., and arrow-heads, stone hatchets and other evidences of their having lived and died here. Even after the settlements by the whites commenced, the Indians often came here to spend the hunting and fishing season. Another reason why this became an important stopping place for them was that here was the best ford across the Des Plaines River, and crossing could be affected here in consequence of the rapid fall and numerous channels into which the river was divided in extreme high water, when it could nowhere else.¹

The first permanent settlement in the area began as early as 1830 when a small colony was established north of Lockport, called Runyontown. There was not a sizable number of people there until after 1836, however. In that year the surveyors of the Illinois and Michigan Canal platted the town with the intent of making Lockport their headquarters. The streets were laid out in a grid pattern and public lands were set aside in the central parts of town. One was to be used as a public square while the other was sectioned off at a central location along the canal and called the Public Landing. Efforts were made by the early settlers of Runyontown to induce the Canal Commissioners to call the plat an addition to Runyontown. The effort failed and the early settlement was soon depopulated in favor of Lockport.²

In order to develop the region and transport supplies to contractors working on the canal, a road was constructed from Chicago along the entire length of the canal route. Built at the cost of \$40,000, it was named Archer Road. The road was controversial because the money to construct it came from the canal budget. The road, however, assisted greatly in the early settlement of the town. Just north of town it bridged Milne Creek which further encouraged the small settlement of Runyontown to relocate in Lockport. Completion of the road in 1839 linked Lockport with the rapidly developing city of Chicago and brought a steady stream of commercial goods and services into the village.

The construction of the canal led to wild speculation along its entire route. Chicago became the center for this speculative mania as real estate values advanced in leaps and bounds. In 1830, lots in the pioneer outpost called

Chicago were selling at an average of price of \$35.00. Only four years later, lots on the chief business street sold for \$35,000.³ The rise and decline of real estate values in Lockport were less phenomenal but a steady increase in prices did occur as construction of the canal progressed. One event which decreased speculation in Lockport was the organization of a protective society against speculators. When a land sale took place in Chicago for properties in Lockport township, the citizens of the area appointed one of their number to look after their interests.

As the number of claims were called, they would stand around and watch to see if a speculator bid, and if so, unless he took it back very suddenly, they put him in the river until he did.⁴

Some of the names associated with the earliest businesses and industries of Lockport were, Dr. J.F. Daggett, C.E. Boyer, Armstead Runyon, Hiram Norton, George Gaylord and George Martin. Many of those first men gained their wealth from the quarrying of stone as the Des Plaines River Valley provided seemingly inexhaustible amounts of limestone. This resource was first used in construction of the I&M Canal as limestone flagging and block was needed in the laying of the canal bed and construction of locks. The report of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Board of Commissioners in December 1838 stated:

Good stone conveniently situated and carefully tested has been found in sufficient abundance; and water lime or Roman cement of the most superior quality lies in inexhaustible beds scattered along the line from Lockport to the Little Vermillion River.⁵

With the completion of the canal in 1848, the stone quarry industry became one of the largest businesses in Lockport. The canal provided a convenient and inexpensive means of transporting stone to the developing towns along its

banks. One of the first quarries in the area (just north of Joliet) was opened by John Henley. In 1848 he sold \$800.00 worth of stone. Two years later, he had a business of \$3,000. In 1851 the business jumped to \$5,000 and his record books show that he had more orders than he had workers to meet those orders.⁶ A similar quarry on the west side of the canal and a little south of Lockport was owned by Dr. J.F. Daggett. Upon his first year in business he claimed to have extracted and sold \$33,000 worth of stone.⁷ The Will County History further described the quarry business in the vicinity of Lockport:

The stone quarries in and around Lockport are quite an important branch of the business of Lockport, though in the immediate vicinity of the village the stone does not compare in quality with the quarries of Joliet and Lemont. J.A. Boyer opened a quarry here but the quality of stone taken from it did not warrant the working of it and it was soon abandoned. J.A. Boyer however owned quarries at Lemont and produces top grade stone, profiting greatly from it. He furnished much of the quarried rock used in the beautiful stone front buildings recently erected on the West Side of Chicago.⁸

A second major industry which developed in the area was grain milling and transport. The canal was of primary importance in making Lockport a grain center in northern Illinois. Its transport facilities and water power potential were the resources which led to that development. One alteration on the canal at Lockport gave the village the greatest water power potential at any point along the canal. On June 1, 1848, a contract was signed by George Barnett and the Canal Commissioners to construct the Hydraulic Basin on the west side of the canal. This 370 by 260 foot basin provided a twenty-one foot fall of water. Soon after its completion, Hiram Norton and Co. obtained exclusive water power rights to the basin (1853) and constructed a flour

mill on its western edge. His firm became one of the largest milling operations in the State. In the same year a second grain merchant established himself at Lockport. Colonel George B. Martin commenced his business in the stone warehouse (built by the State in 1837) lying at the north end of the Public Landing. It also developed into one of the largest grain businesses in the area.

By 1850 the population of the township had grown to 1,657.⁹ Statistics concerning grain transport along the canal parallel the rapid growth in population at this site. Lockport was the leading exporter of grain on the canal. In an account of grain transport compiled by the Canal Commissioners for the first half of 1851, it was found that Joliet and Morris were running a poor second to Lockport in volume of grain exports:¹⁰

In order to aid the transport of grain from the outlying farm lands to the west, a plank road was constructed. In September 1851, the County Board of Supervisors granted a right-of-way over the public highway between Lockport and Plainfield to the Lockport, Plainfield and Yorkville Plank Road Company.¹¹ Tolls were to be paid by the users at the toll gates. It was

expected that a large return on investment would be realized, as plank roads were regarded as much more useful to farmers than railroads. In the early 1850's these roads were often referred to as the farmers' railroads.¹²

Boat building was another early enterprise important in the development of Lockport. At the opening of the canal in 1848 there were only sixteen boats ready for service.¹³ That shortage led to the establishment of canal boat shops in at least three places in Lockport. The Illinois and Michigan Canal boat house located south of Eleventh Street was built to accomodate the needs of the State. It acted as a storage area and repair shop for boats owned by the Trustees. The boats built at that site were responsible for providing maintainance along the entire length of the canal.

As early as 1853, the Village minute book contains petitions by private individuals to lease space on the Public Landing for the purpose of boat building. One such petition granted in July of that year reads:

The committee on Streets, Bridges and Public Lands would report relative to B.A. Thorp's petition for leasing so much of the Public Landing as lies between the bridge and the first telegraph pole for the purpose of building and repairing boats, that he be required to pay the sum of \$50.00 per year for the use of same.¹⁴

These enterprises were of short duration however. No permanent boat building company was organized until 1854, when O.D. Brooks was given permission by the Canal Commissioners and the Village of Lockport to, "occupy a portion of Fourth Street for the purpose of construction and putting down ways to draw out and repair canal boats."¹⁵ By 1856, business was prospering and it looked as though Lockport had become the hub of boat construction on the

Canal. In January that year the Joliet Signal took stock of the situation there and noted that during:

the previous season there had been built at that place some 15 boats ranging in value from \$2,500 to \$2,800. This season there were nine under construction in anticipation for the opening of navigation, some having sold on contract as high as \$3,000. Twenty boats were already owned in Lockport and five or six of those under construction were for residents of that village while the repair boats owned by the Trustees and built and manned there brought the total up over thirty, worth not less than \$60,000.¹⁶

The items which arrived into Lockport via the canal were also a significant factor in the town's development. In 1848 the canal brought large quantities of pine and cedar lumber from the northern forests, reducing the price to about half that of the preceding year when the supply was received from St. Louis and Pittsburgh markets. Agricultural products from the south, such as sugar, molasses, coffee and other tropical products from the New Orleans and St. Louis markets were carried to Lockport via the canal. Manufactured goods from the east also became readily available to the citizens of Lockport. In a list of compiled toll rates upon the Illinois and Michigan Canal, one hundred and fifty separate items were given. Included were general items such as machinery and hides, as well as such specific items as broom handles, tobacco and ginseng.¹⁷ The volume of goods transported on the canal quadrupled in a three year period ending in 1850.¹⁸

The earliest merchants selling these goods were located in three areas; Commerce Street, State Street and at either end of the Public Landing. Dry goods and grocery stores were often associated with the grainery business in the nineteenth century mid-West. Farmers bringing their harvest into town would

sell it to a grainary and receive a credit slip in return. In the case of both Hiram Norton and Colonel Martin a grocery and supply store stood adjacent to their warehouse, where farmers would obtain an amount of items needed equal in value to their credit slip. A variety of items were available from these two grain dealers. A newspaper advertisement dated, August 1851 listed such items as:¹⁹

SUGAR, COFFEE & MOLASSES
at wholesale and retail
NORTON & CO. have just received
a large consignment of the above
which they offer at Chicago prices.

CABINET FURNITURE
Tables, chairs, bedsteads, etc.
kept on hand and for sale at
Chicago prices, plus freight.
(Norton and Co.)

FIRE INSURANCE
The subscriber having accepted
of the agency of the St. Lawrence
Mutual Insurance Company of New
York, is prepared to receive
applications for insurance.

The terms are as favorable as
those of any other Institution
of respectable standing.
Hiram Norton
(Lockport, October 2, 1950)

Retail merchants also purchased agricultural goods from the local farmers, paying cash for their products. Farmers from the outlying regions represented a large segment of Lockport's daily business and individual retailers attempted to gain the largest share possible. For example, one merchant called his shop the "Farmers' Store." Under a newspaper ad headlined "CROCKERY & GROCERIES" there appeared the following:

And as I am the only merchant that has a full assortment on hand at all times, it will be the interest of every person purchasing goods of any description in this market to give me a call and more especially the FARMERS, as my Store is just what the sign indicates - FARMERS' STORE.

I am at all times buying Grain of all kinds, and everything the farmer has to part with and never say, "I don't wish to buy."²⁰

Dry goods, 'fancy goods,' and manufactured goods from the East were the most popular items now readily available in Lockport. George Gaylord who had one of the most complete retail shops in Lockport made frequent trips to the East to personally select the goods in his store. Upon his return from a buying trip in 1851 the Lockport Telegraph announced:²¹

NEW AND CHOICE SELECTION
of
GOODS!
GEO. GAYLORD

Has just returned from New York with a full assortment and choice variety of Goods, which he has selected with great care expressly for the wants of this market.

DRY GOODS, consisting of prints, gingham, Bareges, Silk poplins, Lawns, Silks, Etc.

also

BROADCLOTHS, Black and Fancy cassimeres, Satinets, and a full assortment of SUMMER WEAR.

HATS AND CAPS
Boots and Shoes

Hardware, Scythes, Forks, Rakes, etc. all of which he offers at fair rates for prompt pay.....
All kinds of produce taken in pay - and cash will not be refused.

CASH AND PRODUCE

Cash and the highest price will be paid for, 10,000 bushels of corn. Ditto for oats. The farmers will also find a good market for their Butter, Cheese, Eggs, etc.

The political incorporation of Lockport took place in February 1853. The Village Charter included the provisions for the annual election of officers to the Board, an organized system for the collection of taxes, the power to grant railroad right-of-ways, and for the construction and maintainance of streets and sidewalks.

One of the first duties of the Village Board was to order the laying of sidewalks along both sides of State Street between Eighth and Eleventh Streets. Individual shop owners on the street were ordered to comply with the statute by August of that year.²² Specifications for the walks indicated that the materials used could be either two inch pine planks or stone flagging. The following year limestone sidewalks were layed along the length of Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Streets from the Public Landing eastward to Hamilton Street.²³

Another resolution ordered by the Board was the appointment of a special committee to administer a program for the planting of shade trees along State Street. The committee however, experienced a certain amount of community resistance to the program. In a meeting held on the fourth of June, 1855, seven property owners were named in refusing to pay their share in the shade trees. To cover that deficit, the committee was left no other alternative than to draw from the village's newly established treasury:

whereas the above individuals having refused to pay the small charges made for procuring and planting out shade trees in front of their respective premises as directed in accordance with the wishes of the citizens of Lockport, be it resolved that the sum of seventeen dollars and three cents be hereby appropriated for the payment of the same together with the charges for said trees in front of non-resident premises and the clerk draw an order on the treasurer for this amount.²⁴

The most significant motion enacted by the Village Board in this early period however, was the granting of a right-of-way to the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad. On March 3, 1856 the Board's secretary recorded that:

Permission be and is hereby given to the Joliet and Chicago
(shortly to become the C.A. & St. L.) Railroad Commission to

lay down a single or double track in Commerce Street through the Village of Lockport. The space occupied by said tracks shall not exceed twenty-two feet in width and the work to be constructed so that the carriages and other vehicles may pass along said street without obstruction.²⁵

That permission had been long awaited by the industries, businessmen and citizens of Lockport. The village had been in competition with Joliet, her neighbor four miles to the south, since their inception. Although Joliet was the County seat, the excitement generated by the I&M Canal at Lockport kept the rate of population growth at these two sites equal during the late 1840's and early 1850's. In fact, the population of Joliet decreased in 1851. This trend however, was reversed when the Village of Joliet obtained a charter with the newly organized Chicago and Rock Island Railroad. Construction of the line between Chicago and Joliet began in 1851 and was completed in October of 1852. A second charter was drawn up with Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad in 1852. That line, connecting Joliet with St. Louis, was completed in 1854. By the end of that year Joliet had rail connections with Chicago, with the Trans-Mississippi West over the Rock Island, and with the south by way of the St. Louis gateway over the Alton Line.²⁶

By 1855, Joliet had taken prominence over Lockport. The I&M Canal transport and Lockport's importance in canal affairs continued to increase annually, but the railroad had bypassed the village, thus retarding its growth. A comment published in reference to the development of Joliet's railroads and her rivalry with Lockport briefly stated that:

Lockport was left out in the cold, and she was welcome to her old canal office, over which Jolietians had growled so many years.²⁷

With the charter of March 1856, the citizens of Lockport hoped that the development and importance of their village would once again take the lead. Among the incorporators of the Alton extension were prominent Lockport business men, such as Hiram Norton, Joel Manning and William Gooding.²⁸

The contract for the construction of the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis extension was let in June 1857 to C.E. Boyer and Company of Lockport. The line was completed from Joliet to Lockport in November, 1857, and to Chicago in the early spring of 1858.²⁹ The opening of the railroad was celebrated in true mid-century fashion, with an excursion to Chicago.³⁰

With the opening of the railroad, the competition for transporting goods in the region had begun. The railroad easily took from the canal the passenger traffic, which had assumed considerable proportions. For six years the canal and river route had been a popular one with western travelers. An excellent line of packet boats operated between Chicago and LaSalle and an equally good packet service was provided for the river trip from LaSalle to St. Louis. But within a few months after the opening of the railroad, practically all the passenger business deserted the canal for the speedier mode of travel.³¹

The contest for the transport of agricultural goods was a longer and more closely matched struggle. In the early years, the terminal facilities for handling freight on the two routes were not very different. Whatever advantage existed was in favor of the canal. Warehouses for the receipt, storage and shipment of grain and merchandise were established on its banks. Mills and factories were largely dependent on it for both power and

transportation facilities. But as the years passed by the railway facilities were improved and those of the canal were not. Then the owners of warehouses and manufacturing establishments, grain shippers and others largely engaged in transportation showed a tendency to desert the canal and transfer their business to the railroad. When business establishments were kept on the canal, the railroad usually constructed side-tracks to them and became a competitor for business on the banks of the canal itself.³² In spite of this, the slower canal successfully competed with the railroad for many years as transport rates on the waterway remained considerably lower. In the end, the railroad secured most of this traffic but only after its service and charges had been greatly affected by the struggle. Perishable goods, machinery and clothing were some of the first items to seek the more rapid means of transportation. Lumber, grain, coal and stone continued to be transported on the canal in large quantities for several years after the higher class freight had chiefly gone to the railroad. For the commercial year, from April 1, 1866 to March 31, 1867, 33,929,632 bushels of corn were received at Chicago, of which 9,575,569 bushels were carried on the canal and 4,279,190 bushels on the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad.³³

During the early 1860's Lockport's quarrying and grain industries continued to dominate the commercial life of the Village. The United States Industrial Census of 1860 indicated that two major quarries were associated with Lockport. George Gaylord (who also owned a dry goods store on State Street) ran a quarry business which annually produced over \$10,000 worth of stone. It operated eight months of the year and employed forty men. However, the

largest quarry in Lockport that year was owned by the firm of Sanger and Casey. Their operation, which employed one-hundred men for eight months of the year, extracted and sold \$30,448 worth of stone in 1860.³⁴ The quarries located in Lemont and Joliet also continued to be important in the development of Lockport as many of the owners and workers of those quarries lived in the village.

One significant business in Lockport directly associated to grain processing was John Fiddymment's distillery. On an annual basis, his business produced 1,700 barrels of corn whiskey, 200 barrels of rye whiskey and 350 barrels of scotch. Associated with this business, Mr. Fiddymment had a cooperage shop which annually turned out 3,000 whiskey barrels. The distillery and cooperage required the employment of thirteen men for the entire year. Mr. Fiddymment's annual value of production for the year ending June 1, 1860 amounted to \$27,000.³⁵

Grain processing and transport however, became the largest business in Lockport during those years. In 1863, George Gaylord leased a parcel of land along the canal at Eighth Street and erected a grain elevator having a capacity of 60,000 bushels. By the end of that decade he was handling an annual volume of 200,000 bushels.³⁶ Colonel George B. Martin who had been active in the business since 1851, had a large warehouse and a number of grain elevators on the north end of the Public Landing. The capacity of his elevators was 250,000 bushels and it was reported that he was handling 500,000 bushels per annum.³⁷

The most successful grain merchant in Lockport however, was the firm of Norton and Co. Their operation was systematic and covered all aspects of the grain business, from purchasing the raw materials to marketing the finished product. On the south end of the Public Landing stood the Company warehouse, the largest in Lockport. West of the canal, on the hydraulic basin, stood Norton's flouring mill which processed 100,000 bushels of wheat and 20,000 bushels of corn annually. In conjunction with the flouring mill was a saw mill and cooperage. The saw mill produced 800,000 board feet of lumber in 1860, much of which was used in the cooper shop where 20,000 flour barrels, 2,000 pork barrels and 300 butter firkins were made.³⁸ In 1861 the company was handling grain by the train load, some days purchasing and shipping as much as 2,500 bushels. Ten canal boats were constantly in service, taking grain from Lockport to Chicago where it was delivered on board lake carriers without transfer through warehouses.³⁹ In addition to the mills, Norton and Co. owned a lime kiln, which produced 15,000 bushels of lime during its eight month operating year, and a shingle mill which produced 150,000 shingles from 300 cords of wood annually. The assessed value of Norton and Company's production for the year ending June 1, 1860 was recorded in excess of \$150,000.⁴⁰

Unlike Joliet, which was developing a mixed industrial base and would soon go on to become an important center of steel fabrication and railroad transportation, Lockport by the end of the 1860's was well on its way to becoming dependent on one industry for its livelihood. The town's commitment to grain processing and transport, closely linked to the canal and dependent

upon water power, limited its options and restricted its growth. By the 1870's that trend was even more defined as the village became solely dependant on one company (Norton and Company) for its future development or stagnation.

During the 1860's a number of public improvements occurred in the village. The first of these was the construction of a freight and passenger depot at Thirteenth Street on the east side of the Chicago Alton and St. Louis maintrack. The railroad's request that the station be built directly next to their tracks placed it in the center of Commerce Street, effectively terminating the street at this point. Community resistance to the location of the depot appears to have been expressed but, on October 9, 1862 the Village Board approved the site granting the C.A. & St. L. its location.⁴¹

Improvements in Lockport's main east-west highway also occurred. In April 1868, the Highway Commissioners for the Township of Lockport approved the construction of an arched stone bridge to run westward from Ninth Street across the Des Plaines River. Specifications for the bridge concluded that a total of seven arches (each having an approximate length of 28 feet) were needed to span the river.⁴² Construction of the bridge was completed in October of the following year.⁴³

Major developments in transportation, industry and village growth however, began with the decade of the 1870's. During the first years of that period,

the village received its second rail connection when the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad laid its tracks on the west side of the canal. Gaining a charter for that line became a political battle, as the township found it necessary to purchase \$75,000 in capital stock before the railroad would locate in Lockport.⁴⁴ Late in 1869, a referendum on the railroad was held, with the township approving the purchase. In July 1870, the Village Board granted a right-of-way to the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad indicating that:

the company could locate, build and operate their Railroad on and through the following named streets situated on the west side of the canal. Water Street, Vine Street, Davis Street, Clinton Street and Canal Street, running north and south on all other streets that may be found necessary to cross or run through in locating, building and operating the main and side track to said railroad.⁴⁵

In 1873 the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad, located on the east side of the canal, sought an expansion of its service through Lockport. Included in that expansion was a request to construct an additional set of tracks along the east edge of their present main track. In order to accommodate that expansion, over one-third of Commerce Street was to be sacrificed. Merchants in the area as well as many of the citizens of Lockport were strongly opposed to the addition at the expense of the street. Opposition was so resolute that some individuals attempted to physically block construction efforts on the tracks.⁴⁶ The importance of the railroad to the development of the town could not, however, be overlooked by the Village Board. Like the town of Joliet which gave, to the chagrin of its citizens, a right-of-way to the Rock Island Railroad directly through its Public Square, the Village Board of Lockport conceded to the wishes of the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis line.⁴⁷

With the completion of those tracks Commerce Street became unnavigable to commercial traffic. Wagons hauling goods could no longer pass each other as the narrow width of the street prohibited it. Access to Norton and Company and the Public Landing also became difficult and even dangerous. The tracks were laid across the intersections of town with little attempt by the railroad to furnish an even surface at these crossing points for wagons, horses or pedestrians. A steady volume of complaints were registered by the citizens of Lockport concerning these crossings. The minute book of the Village Board contains a written reference to this problem at almost every council meeting. Ordinance violations were also filed in equal numbers concerning the lack of safety at street crossings. Other than the approaching train's whistle, no warning was provided for traffic crossing the tracks at Tenth Street. Lack of appropriate signaling devices combined with the frequency of passing trains made crossing the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis tracks a real danger. An ordinance was finally enacted to place a maximum speed limit of six miles per hour trains passing through the village. Although this alleviated the danger associated with the railroad, it failed to alter the problem of commercial access to the area. Because of this problem, all commercial and retail activity eventually focused on State Street.

The major development of the decade for Lockport occurred on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The original engineering specifications of 1837 called for the canal to be dug to an equal depth between Lockport and Chicago. Due to the lack of adequate funding that specification was not met. Consequently, canal transport, and industries dependant upon water power were restricted by

inadequate water levels during the drier months of the year. As early as 1866, a plan was announced for deepening the channel of the I&M Canal, thereby reversing the flow of the Chicago River. Referred to as the "deep cut," proponents of the project claimed that it would provide the canal with an inexhaustible amount of water directly from Lake Michigan. Upon its completion early in 1872, water levels increased and stabilized, however, this asset had one objectionable feature. The inhabitants of Lockport quickly realized that the "deep cut" was also an expedient means for the city of Chicago to solve its growing sewage problem.

The completion of the "deep cut" was eagerly awaited by the citizens of Lockport. To them, the increase in water volume on the canal would spell an equal increase of wealth in their community. In December 1870, the Joliet Republican reporting on the plans for the "deep cut" closed its article by saying:

The deepening of the canal and the consequent increased water power to be created in Lockport, is an event of much importance to the town and all who are acquainted with its numerous local advantages predict an era of prosperity that will certainly insure a large accession to its business and population.⁴⁸

The industrial advantages gained by the "deep cut" fell to the interest of one company in Lockport--Norton and Company. Having gained all water power leases on the canal at Lockport as early as 1853, Norton and Company negotiated an addendum in 1866 to gain sole access to the increased hydraulic potential of the "deep cut." Work on the canal was completed on February 12, 1872 when a butterfly dam at the summit level was opened, allowing the waters of Lake Michigan to freely flow thirty-three miles to Lockport.⁴⁹ Three days

later the industries of Norton and Company started operations with the confidence that their turbines would never again falter for lack of water.

In that same year Norton and Company reconverted their saw mill and wood machine shop, located on the hydraulic basin, into a paper mill. The paper mill used straw as its raw material, and produced a rough quality paper board product. By 1874 the Lockport Paper Mill was turning out five tons of straw board paper per day, consuming six tons of straw in the process. The number of employees at the mill increased from four, at the time it was a saw mill, to thirty-five.⁵⁰

Subsequent increases in manufacturing capacities and employment were also realized at the Flour Mill. With the reopening of the canal in 1872, the mills began operating around the clock. With the increase in hydraulic power the milling operations went from nine run of stone, to eleven in 1874 and thirty by 1880. In 1874 the mill was producing 300 barrels of flour and 500 barrels of corn meal in a twenty-four day.⁵¹ By 1880 production of both flour and corn meal had increased to a total of 550 barrels of flour and 11,000 pounds of cornmeal daily.⁵² To meet the increased demand for flour barrels the cooperage also stepped up its productivity. By 1874 the shop was turning out 120,00 barrels annually and employing forty to fifty men.⁵³

The increased industrial capacity and financial success of Norton and Company directly affected the development of the village. State Street gained a number of new business concerns in the early 1870's. Between the period of 1871 and 1876 no less than forty-seven new businesses appeared along State

Street.⁵⁴ One of those new business concerns was directly associated with Norton and Company. George B. Norton (half brother of John L. Norton) opened one of the largest dry goods departments on State Street. Located on the corner of Tenth and State the business handled fancy and staple dry goods, notions, ready made clothing, jewelry, hats and caps, carpets, etc. On the second floor was a millinery and ladies furnishings department, a dress making room and a men's tailoring department.⁵⁵

Starting in the mid-1870's a number of new commercial structures started to appear on State Street. In 1876 Dr. Bacon, a well known physician in Lockport, constructed a significant three story brick building on the nine hundred block of State Street. At the commercial level he operated a drug store reported to be the finest in the village.⁵⁶ The increased rail traffic between Commerce Street and the landing and the offensive nature of the canal water apparently led Norton and Company to relocate. Sometime after 1878, Norton and Company moved their grocery store and office facilities, originally located off the Public Landing, on to State Street. The Italianate structure is located on the northeast corner of State and Tenth, directly across from the Norton Dry Goods Store. The general store was situated on the commercial level, while office space was provided on the second floor. It is worth noting that the move of Norton and Company was important in defining State Street as the central business district of Lockport.

In 1881 George B. Norton requested the Village Board approval to remove his wood frame dry goods store, making way for a larger stone structure. Later in

that year construction began on what would be one of the most significant structures on State Street. Upon its completion the three story limestone structure stood 42 feet by 84 feet, at the southeast corner of Tenth and State Street. The commercial level was used as an expanded dry goods store, while on the second floor was an opera house. The building, known as the Norton Opera House, became the cultural center of town.

With an expanding industrial base, two major commercial buildings on State Street and a number of smaller buildings nearby, Norton and Company began to dominate the economy of Lockport. It was not until 1878 however, that Lockport could have been classified as a mill town. Prior to 1878, the firm of Colonel George B. Martin did an equal volume of grain purchasing and transport as Norton and Company. Although he did not manufacture flour at Lockport, the business functioned as an important grain depot for the surrounding county. By 1873, Dun and Bradstreet credit reports listed his net worth to be \$250,000.⁵⁷ By 1875 Colonel Martin expanded his business, investing heavily in a second grain depot north of Lockport. In early 1878 that investment failed. Unable to recover his losses, the business at Lockport failed as well, taking with it considerable amounts of savings deposits of the local farmers. Upon that failure Norton and Company became the only major industrial firm in Lockport.

After 1878 Lockport became almost totally dependant upon Norton and Company for its economic well being. During the decade of the 1880's, that reliance had a positive effect as the Norton Mills experienced their greatest period of

growth and prosperity. Their industries lined both sides of the canal and encircled the hydraulic basin. At least three large multi-story stone and wood structures lined the north west side of the basin. The structures were associated with the flour milling operation. The first of these buildings was the cleaning house which chaffed the wheat, preparing it for milling. It stood forty-eight feet high and was constructed of stone. A large amount of machinery was associated with the cleaning house including five grain separators, four scourers, two cockle machines and eight dust collectors. Thirty feet to the south stood two of the largest structures in the village. One functioned as an elevator while the other was the flouring mill. These multi-story buildings stood sixty feet tall, dominating the skyline of Lockport. The five story flour mill was situated directly along side the hydraulic basin, with a wheel house or power house adjacent to the mill. It provided the power which turned one hundred sets of rolls, thirty scalping reels and forty-six purifiers. A flour packing house of five story wood and two story stone construction stood on the north edge of the basin. Nine mechanically operated flour packers were housed in the structure.⁵⁸ To the south of the basin was the equally large Lockport Paper Company (also owned by Norton and Co.). At least six structures were associated with the plant, all of which were one or two stories high. The paper mill was powered by two water wheels and five steam boilers which generated approximately three hundred and forty horse power. Six million pounds were produced in 1880.⁵⁹

Norton and Company's holdings had also expanded beyond Lockport. By the mid-1880's the firm owned an additional flour mill in Chicago, a paper mill in

Wilmington, Illinois and was investing heavily in a hydroelectric project and paper mill near Niagara Falls, New York.

Norton's influence upon the municipal responsibilities of Lockport was also growing. Since the company operated the most powerful water pumps in the area, the village leased a share of that pressure for its small hydrant and fire protection system. Street sprinkling, a necessity for keeping down the dust along State Street, was also provided by Norton's water wagon. By 1892 an electric street lighting system was installed along State Street. The electricity need to light those lamps was leased from Norton and Company, at a cost to the village of \$1,750.00 annually.⁶⁰

During those years of prosperity, Lockport's central business district became well defined. The 1886 Sandborn-Perris maps indicate a solid block of commercial buildings on the west side of State Street between Ninth and Tenth. The east side of the block was less defined, with a number of buildings appearing to be only one or two story wood frame structures. Although the east side is not a solid block of storefronts, all of the structures served a commercial function. Directly south of Tenth Street, Norton's Opera House dominated the north east corner of that block. Southward from there, on both sides of State, the street breaks up into small one and two story buildings of both commercial and residential useage.⁶¹

A number of other developments occurred during the 1880's. As early as 1880 a telephone line was installed by the Illinois and Michigan Canal Commissioners

at its central office in Lockport. The line, which ran along a section of the canal, represented one of the first rural telephone lines in Illinois. An extension of that cable was completed in 1882 and reported upon by the Commissioners:

Completion of a telephone line from Lockport to Aux Sable... The line was in working order early in December (1880) and proved a great savings of time and expense. During this season the line was extended from Aux Sable to Ottawa a distance of thirty miles, sending a continuous line from Lockport to Ottawa, in all about fifty miles.⁶²

A second access road over the canal and Des Plaines River Valley was constructed in 1887. The road connected Division Street (the south corporate line of the village of Lockport) with the Bluff Road on the west side of the Des Plaines Valley. A highway Commissioners report in June 1887 indicates the survey line of the future road:

Petition to lay out a new road having a sixty foot width is hereby granted...Starting at Bluff Road running eastward along section line 22 and 27, thence eastward along said section line to State Street in the Village of Lockport.⁶³

Another important development in the progress of public transportation occurred in the late 1880's. Three men from Joliet representing a street car company requested the Township Highway Commissioner to grant a right-of-way along the main road from Joliet to Lockport. On July 29, 1889 they received permission to:

construct, operate and maintain a street railway from the South line of Lockport township northward to the South Corporate line of the Village of Lockport.⁶⁴

That line would connect with the northern terminus of Joliet's street car system. Upon its completion, street car service was available from Joliet to Division Street (the southern boundary of the village of Lockport). The line did not extend into the village until 1904.

The period of the early 1890's was a time of continued growth for the Village of Lockport. Many of the largest commercial structures on State Street were built in those years. One of the centers of commercial development occurred on the west side of State Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets. In 1890 a large brick structure known as the "Ward Block" was built on the northwest corner of State and Tenth. The building occupied almost one-third of the commercial frontage on the street. The "Ward Block" was initially a three story hotel with the commercial level divided into three separate bays; saloon, dining room and hotel lobby, bank and a dry goods store. Adjacent to the block was a two story brick structure, with similar architectural detailing. At the opposite end of the street a two story brick building was constructed next to Dr. Bacon's office and drugstore. With the completion of those commercial buildings both ends of the block presented a solid commercial facade onto State Street. The central one-third of the block remained undeveloped, with a number of one and two story frame structures occupying the space.⁶⁵

Foundations for two sizable stone commercial structures were laid in 1891.⁶⁶ The first was located on the northeast corner of State and Eleventh Streets. Known as the "Farrell Block," the two story brick structure was completed in 1892. The second foundation located near the southeast corner of Eleventh and State, was the new George W. Adelman livery. It was completed in 1891. Three years later an equally large addition was built directly on the corner of State and Eleventh. The "Adelman Block" was one of the largest commercial blocks in the village. Built and owned by George Adelman, it

represented an important shift in the wealth of Lockport. Up until the 1890's the wealth of the community had been held by New Yorkers and New Englanders. Beginning in that decade a shift occurred with more of Lockport's wealth held by first and second generation Americans.

This period of construction and development occurred on the eve of a national depression. Known as the Panic of 1893, the depression brought about a staggering number of failures in the realm of business and banking. Those hard times effected Lockport to a greater degree than most towns of its size. A serious depression in farm prices accompanied the panic and that in turn affected the flour production of Norton and Company. In January 1894 it was announced that the Lockport Paper mill was reducing its wages for common laborers. A record drop in traffic on the canal also occurred. For the year 1893, receipts from tolls were \$11,000 less than they ever were in the history of the canal.⁶⁷

All of these problems made the depression of the 1890's an exceedingly bad time for the village of Lockport. Municipal services in the village were cut back in the Board's attempt to trim the already slim budget. When the Board received notice that an increase in electricity rates would be levied by Norton and Company, they found it impossilbe to pay. In the first years of street lighting, Norton and Company had charged the village \$1,750.00 annually. In October 1894 they indicated that the fee would be increased to \$2,000 for the following year. The Village Board, having no alternative power source, approved the rate hike knowing full well money to cover it would be unavailable:

The Board agreed to pay Norton and Company for street lighting at the annual rate of \$2,000 as long as the money in the appropriations lasted. This will leave us without electric lights for a couple of months next spring.⁶⁸

The lack of municipal funds led to a serious decline in village services and turned State Street into a second class commercial district. Numerous editorials appeared in the Lockport newspaper criticizing the Board for its inability to further the progress of the village. One editorial written early in 1895 described the condition of the village and asked who would take pride in such a place:

They cannot point with pride to the elegant street for in the wet season some of them are about as impossible as country roads. And who would locate and build a house in Lockport...? Why build a house where there are no sewers to carry off waste; no running water to protect against fire and where there is no gas for light?⁶⁹

Beginning in the year 1894 a long and heated debate took place over the installation of an adequate fire protection system in Lockport. The existing hydrant system consisted of a single three inch water pipe originating in Norton and Company's warehouse. From there it ran up to State Street and branched off to service the three blocks of commercial buildings on either side. An extension also ran up Tenth Street and then northward to the public school.⁷⁰ Realizing that the system was inadequate, the Village Board began investigation into a more extensive system. After months of investigation, construction for the new water works was slated to begin in late summer of 1895.

That summer was one of the hottest and driest on record in Illinois. In the first days of August temperatures rose into the 100 degree range in northern

Illinois. On the morning of August tenth a fire was accidentally started on the roof of the McDonald printing office (located on Tenth Street) one store off of State. According to newspaper accounts, the fire quickly engulfed the roof of the building and the strong wind fanned the flames into a fierce blaze almost before the alarm could be sounded.⁷¹ The sparks and burning embers were carried to adjoining buildings by a strong southerly wind. The hydrant system proved to be as inadequate as predicted and the fire was free to work its way steadily northward on State Street. Store after store rapidly ignited until every building in the block fronting on the street between Ninth and Tenth Streets was in flames.

The only building on the east side of State Street excluded from the fire was the grocery and hardware store owned by Norton and Company. When the fire broke out the building was given a huge dousing of water from an interior sprinkler linked into the town's hydrant system. The sprinkler drained what little pressure was available from the hydrant. When hoses were brought up from the mill it was found that there was but little pressure in the line, "enough only to drive out little more than a squirt of water." Making that discovery the merchants and mill workers fighting the blaze could do little more than prevent the flames from spreading to the west side of State Street.

At eleven o'clock the Chicago Fire Department was telegraphed by the Mayor and it was greatly hoped assistance would reach them on a special train. In the meantime bucket brigades were busy on the west side of State Street in wetting the blistering buildings and cracking panes to keep the fire from spreading.

After the entire block of State Street between Ninth and Tenth was in flames, the fire spread to the north side of Ninth Street. The town's post office, a shoe shop and meeting hall were rapidly consumed by the fire. Anticipating the blaze, postal employees bagged up all the mail and removed it from the building. An effort was made by the Joliet Fire Department to save the public school, located on the town square, but their efforts were unsuccessful and the fire fighters were soon driven from the building.

While the citizens of Lockport, with the assistance of the Joliet and Lemont Fire Departments were battling the blaze, the Chicago Fire Department was preparing a special train of the latest fire fighting equipment. Two pumping engines, a hose cart and two crews of ten men each composed the relief party. They took with them 1,000 feet of extra hose. The train loaded at Harrison Street, secured the necessary dispatches for an emergency right-of-way and started on its way. At one forty in the afternoon, one hour after it left Chicago, the train pulled into Lockport and was greeted by a throng of excited and grateful citizens.

By that hour most of the block bounded by State, Ninth, Hamilton and Tenth Streets had burned and the fire had spread to the north side of Ninth. The Chicago steam driven fire pumps were placed down by the canal and in a very few minutes they had two powerful streams of dirty water playing on the fire. They wasted no time trying to save buildings that were doomed but directed their efforts entirely to preventing the spread of the fire.

State Street and the other streets in the neighborhood of the fire presented a unique apperaranace. Goods of every description, dry goods, groceries, hardware, furniture, household effects, trunks, boxes, showcases, all had been piled out hurriedly from the burning or threatened buildings and deposited onto the street. When the flames were finally quelled, citizens estimated their loss at \$250,000. In spite of this tragedy those who lost the most felt the most optomistic about the town's recovery. The numerous shop owners who suffered from the fire were united in their determination to rebuild. At a meeting held the night after the fire each merchant announced their intention of putting up a new building. Except for one or two merchants, all the buildings were covered by fire insurance. With the settlement of those claims, construction began almost immediately.

By the autumn of 1895 the entire block had been rebuilt. Two and three story brick buildings, housing 'modern' and expanded commercial space, now lined State and Ninth Streets. The Lockport Phoenix closely followed the developments along the street, announcing the completion of buildings and the return of merchants:

F.S. Hutton and Company are again installed in their old quarters that is in the new building on the site of their old quarters. Years of experience have taught Mr. Hutton just what is needed in the way of a first class grocery store and the interior arrangements are 'up to date' in all respects. Before the fire occurred the increasing business of the firm had demonstrated the fact that there was not room enough on the main floor for their accomodations whereby the upper floor is also at their disposal and it is there that their large stock of staples will be stored leaving more room

on the main floor for their own accommodations and the comfort and convenience of their customers...The Liederkranz Society by whom the upper floor was formally leased are seeking other quarters.⁷²

and,

Dr. O.W. Moon is back again in his old quarters in the Meyers block ---- 918 State Street.⁷³

Beginning in the year 1896 Lockport experienced a series of financial disasters. The seeds of these economic difficulties were visible as early as 1878. In that year the I & M Canal reached its highest collection of toll receipts. From 1879 onward revenue on the canal declined steadily. Three years later a record in tonnage was recorded on the canal. Like the toll receipts, tonnage steadily declined from 1884 onward.⁷⁴ By the mid-90's the I&M was suffering from a series of problems. The canal was becoming obsolete as greater capacity canal boats demanded a larger and deeper waterway. The railroad had also gained the majority of the transport business in the mid-West. Finally the I&M Canal was being threatened by the construction of a second canal paralleling its route. Plans for the Sanitary and Ship Canal were presented by the Chicago Sanitary District Board in the early 1890's. With the beginning of construction in the mid-90's, the I&M never regained its importance as a commercial transport route.

The construction of the Sanitary and Ship Canal brought very little in the way of economic assistance to Lockport: in some ways it further weakened the town's depressed condition. When the new canal was surveyed its path was laid through a small developing industrial zone adjacent to the village where one of the few industries not associated with Norton and Company was located.

Known as the Baker Wire Mill, it provided employment for a number of Lockport residents. When construction on the canal began, the wire fence company was forced to move its plant southward into Joliet.

The Sanitary and Ship Canal added a social problem to Lockport's economic difficulties. As many as 6,000 workers were encamped along the route of the canal during its construction. The workers used the nearby towns as their entertainment centers. Saloons appeared to be the most successful enterprise during those years. The village of Lemont (seven miles north of Lockport) was almost taken over by the canal workers, who frequented a section along the railroad tracks called "Smoky Row." Life was cheap on the strip with two or three murders reported a week.⁷⁵ Lockport never developed a strip like Lemont, although a number of saloons in town catered to the canal workers and frequent brawls occurred in the streets. Lockport's police department with the assistance of the specially organized Sanitary District police, kept the situation from becoming a serious social problem.

One positive aspect of the Sanitary and Ship Canal can be recorded. Little in the way of unemployment could be found along its route. The work, however, was physically strenuous and one of the most dangerous occupations in the region. Those aspects of the job made for a chronic lack of man power. In a Lockport newspaper, dated October 31, 1895, a comment on the situation was provided in the 'local section':

It seems that the demand for labor is now in excess of the supply. Three of the derricks of section 14 are now running only one-half time for the reason that men to operate them

cannot be found. If there is any around town who are out of employment and are willing to work they can probably find it on the ditch.⁷⁶

Lockport's dependance on Norton and Company was seriously shaken in December 1896 when, to the surprise of many, the company failed. Reasons for the failure are complex, however, it appears that the company suffered a series of losses. Newspaper reports indicated that a large investment in stocks were made in the 1880's and lost in the panic of '93. A major investment in a hydro plant and paper mill in Niagara Falls, New York also turned into a significant financial loss in the mid-90's. With the failure of the Illinois State Bank (the company's major line of credit) in 1896, Norton and Company declared itself unable to pay its debts. On December 26, 1896 the mills, stores and entire property were turned over to a receiver.⁷⁷ Production at the mills was halted for only a short time and unemployment was not an immediate threat. The immediate problem for the citizens of Lockport, however, was the freezing of their savings accounts with Norton and Company. The receiver (Chicago Title and Trust) declared that all investments were to be held until the company could repay its creditors.

During those years Lockport's central business district suffered greatly. The area lost a number of retail and service facilities such as clothing stores, tailors and grocery stores. Those shops either went vacant or were occupied by saloons. By the turn of the century saloons represented the most common commercial interest in the central business district. A total of nineteen saloons peppered the two and one-half block commercial strip.⁷⁸

With the decline of State Street, residents of Lockport began shopping in other cities. The street car line provided an easy link with the larger, more complete shopping district of Joliet. The frequent railroad service into Chicago provided an equally convenient means of spending a day in the city. Attempts were made by both the local press and the merchants on State Street to halt this exodus. The Lockport Phoenix in April 1899 printed a front page editorial arguing for the continuation of trade on State Street:

It is not to say 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' although that is true. It is to consider for a moment your value as a factor in the prosperity and business of a town.

So, ladies, the prosperity of the town is in your hands. Business makes the town and you make the business. There cannot be business without customers and if you go else where to trade that much custom is lost.

When you spend your money in other places all you get is the goods you buy. When you spend it at home you not only get the goods but the money comes back to you in better streets, better schools or perhaps better patronage of your husband, brother or son...A liberal patronage enables the merchant to carry a larger richer and more varied stock, and your patronage helps your merchant, your town and incidentally yourself.

Will you stand by your town?⁷⁹

Throughout this period attempts were made to attract new industry into the village. The Barrows Lock Company was one of the first manufacturers to respond to that effort. Arriving in 1890 the company occupied the vacant store grainery and warehouse located at the north end of the Public Landing. The firm represented one of the first industries in Lockport to operate totally independent from the I&M Canal. During the period of economic crisis in Lockport the company continued to steadily expand its operations. Aside from Barrows no other new industry settled in the area during the 1890's. The

businessmen's association made several attempts to attract 'new blood,' but their efforts always seemed to lose momentum and die. Many in town believed that the association was not presenting the village in the most positive or dynamic manner. In 1899 an editorial in the Will County Courier challenged the association to act for the betterment of the village:

Now is the time for our Business Men's Association to put forth herculean efforts to locate manufacturing industries in Lockport. There are golden opportunities to be grasped and the association should settle down to a steady business-like method in endeavoring to promote the interest of our town. Eliminate all egotistical sentiment from the association, keep the membership and public interested by informing them of the progress of negotiations and the new developments as they transpire and the association will be aroused from its present somewhat dormant state.⁸⁰

With the opening of the Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900, shipping on the Illinois and Michigan Canal dropped rapidly. Besides problems in maintaining adequate water levels, the railroads had thoroughly covered the transport of goods. By 1905 even products such as coal, potatoes, beans, salt and corn were being carried by the railroads. Stone remained the only product to be carried to the Chicago market via the canal.⁸¹ With the completion of the Calumet Sag Channel in 1907, the I&M Canal was cut in two between Lockport and Chicago. This effectively terminated any transport between those two points and in turn guaranteed an eventual end of the whole canal. Three years later, all water power leases at Lockport were terminated by the Canal Commissioners.

Merchants and businessmen in Lockport began to realize that the new century promised new problems. The major reason for this was that the two dominant factors in Lockport's existence during the nineteenth century were ending. The

first to go down was the Illinois and Michigan Canal, the second was Norton and Company. During its years of receivership, Norton and Company experienced a steady deterioration in business. Like the canal, it was becoming obsolete as gigantic modern grain milling operations were now working in Minnesota. On February 14, 1907, with its financial losses never fully regained, Norton and Company permanently ceased its operations at Lockport. The Lockport Phoenix printed a brief reference to this failure:

Norton and Company of our city, are again in financial trouble, much to the regret of the general public.

Creditors holding claims amounting to about \$600 appeared before Judge Landis in the United States District Court in Chicago last Saturday and filed bankruptcy proceedings.⁸²

But in these financially deprived times positive change was occurring, as the village of Lockport officially became a city. One of its first actions was approval of a right-of-way for the Chicago and Joliet Electric Railway through Lockport via State Street.⁸³ That line eventually ran northward to Lemont and on to Chicago.

The new city government continued to function under the financial burdens of the old Village Board. Although a new enthusiasm was present in the City Council, the absence of industrial and commercial development in the city kept tax revenues at a dangerously low level. Consequently, the treasurer's coffer looked as empty as ever. In April 1908 the city announced itself to be \$30,000.00 in debt.⁸⁴

Because of that deficit basic municipal improvements were left either undone or patched together in hopes of a better day. Street improvements appeared to be the most neglected or at least the most visible problem in the city. At a time when the more 'progressive' cities were paving their streets with brick, Lockport's main street was still a dirt track. Constant attempts by the public to have State Street paved or at least upgraded were met with disappointment. A newspaper report of 1908 City Council meeting announced plans for the improvement of State Street:

A "full house" was again in evidence at the meeting which was given over to the matter of repairing State Street and making a model road of it.

As is well known, the city is more or less financially embarrassed and therefore the committee recommended that only part of State Street between Sixteenth and Eleventh Streets be thoroughly overhauled, and that the remaining section be merely repaired.⁸⁵

Despite the continued financial problems, the year 1908 saw an important improvement in industrial expansion. New industries were beginning to move into the area. One of the first of these was the construction of a coking plant for the Illinois Steel Company. The Lockport Phoenix-Advertiser announced the plant with a front page coverage:

The new coke ovens north and west of the prison hill are practically completed and a fire has been lighted under one battery of the ovens.

At this mammoth new plant many by-products will be produced in addition to coke. These will be manufactured in large quantities and will enter into competition with other manufacturers in this and other counties.

The number of employees at this institution will be gradually increased as additional batteries of ovens are placed in operation. It is more than likely that a large number of men will be employed at this institution within a short time.⁸⁶

By September the first coke was being produced at the ovens. The product was shipped to Joliet where it fired the mills of the Illinois Steel Company.

In 1911, the dormant warehouse and mills of Norton and Company were reopened by the Northern Illinois Cereal Company. Although operations were on a much smaller scale, the company offered a number of jobs to Lockport's residents. The Barrows Lock Company, situated at the north end of the Public Landing, also went through a period of expansion. A major addition was placed on to the stone warehouse and a two story foundry was constructed at the rear of the plant. Both production and the number of employees increased during the period.

In early 1909 a Texas based industry announced its intention to build a new plant just north of the city. With the completion of that plant, Lockport would become a participant in one of the largest industrial concerns of the twentieth century - petroleum refining. The Texas Company founded in 1902, was looking for a suitable area to place its first northern based oil refinery. Lockport's strategic location to Chicago and its advantages in water and rail facilities proved to be ideal for the company's needs. Land was purchased on both sides of the old Illinois and Michigan Canal, with the west edge of their property boarding on the Sanitary and Ship Canal. The first years were spent in the construction of the necessary storage tanks and refining towers. Central management and office facilities were located in a converted farm house. In December 1911, the first units of the plant went "on steam".

The refinery was officially opened in early January 1912. During that year the 'Lockport Works' functioned primarily as a topping plant having a throughput capacity of from 2,500 to 3,000 barrels of crude oil in a twenty-four hour period. It produced nothing but straight-run gasoline, kerosene, and fuel oil. In 1913 a steam stilling capacity and a lubricating oil compounding plant were added.⁸⁷ Additions were continually being made on the plant in those years. Tank cars delivering the crude oil from Oklahoma and Kansas were arriving daily. To accomodate these crude oil shipments, large storage capacity tanks were constructed. With the completion of the refining process the gasoline and kerosene were shipped by tanker on the Sanitary and Ship canal to distribution points throughout the mid-West.

A major expansion occurred in 1922 in response to the growing demand for petroleum products. A six inch diameter pipe line was run to the Lockport plant, connecting it to the Texas Company's crude oil depot in Houston. To handle the significant increase in the flow of crude into the plant, six Holmes-Manely vertical stills and their auxiliary equipment were installed during the years 1922-1923.⁸⁸ With the completion of those cracking stills, the Lockport works became one of the largest refineries in the Texas Company's holdings, second only to their huge plant at Port Arthur, Texas.

These developing industries generated renewed vitality and wealth in Lockport. A sign of that change was an increase in revenue and the balancing of the City budget for the first time in years. As a result, the City Council drafted a comprehensive plan for the laying of sewers and paving of streets.

Major changes in the character of State Street were also occurring. With the beginning of prohibition, Lockport's numerous taverns were closed and the town declared "dry." Retail shops and services on State Street also experienced a marked improvement, as wages earned at local industries found their way back into the community. A local newspaper report covering the activity on State Street during the Christmas season of 1915 spoke of this renewed vitality:

MANY OF the merchants have attractive window displays that would do credit to metropolitan establishments, and a large assortment of every seasonable article is carried in stock. The display of toys is the largest and best that has been shown in many years. Holiday buying is unusually brisk and the merchants are correspondingly happy.

.....business houses report that more people than usual are buying at home, where the stocks are complete, prices as low as anywhere, and where shopping doesn't mean an hour hanging on a strap in a crowded street car. In short, the people are getting the "Lockport Habit."⁸⁹

NOTES:

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- 17) Illinois and Michigan Canal Commissioners, "Rates of Tolls," Chicago 1848.
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- 24) Ibid., page 64.
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- 27) Woodruff, Will County History, page 336.
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- 29) Ibid.
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- 31) Putnam, Illinois and Michigan Canal, page 111.
- 32) Ibid., page 117.
- 33) Ibid., page 112.
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- 40) U.S. Census, Industrial Schedule, Will County, Illinois, 1860.
- 41) Village of Lockport, "Minute Book No. 1," page 182.
- 42) Ibid., page 200-201.
- 43) Ibid., page 215.
- 44) Ibid., page 223.
- 45) Ibid., page 307-308.
- 46) Oral History, Bruce Cheadle, (life long resident of Lockport, Age 86)
Interviewed July 17, 1979.
- 47) Village of Lockport, "Minute Book No. 1," pages 335-336.

- 48) Joliet Republican, December 17, 1870, page 2.
- 49) "Canal Commissioners Report," December 1872, Appendix AA; "Report of the Superintendent," page 68.
- 50) Will County Courier, July 1874.
- 51) Ibid.
- 52) U.S. Census, Industrial Schedule, Will County, 1880.
- 53) Will County Courier, July 1874.
- 54) Dun and Bradstreet Credit Report, Volumes 229, 230, 231.
- 55) Will County Courier, April 1874.
- 56) Woodruff, Will County History, page 132.
- 57) Dun and Bradstreet, Volume 229, page 268.
- 58) Sandborn-Perris, Fire Insurance Maps, Village of Lockport, 1891.
- 59) U.S. Census, Industrial Schedule, Will County, 1880.
- 60) Village of Lockport "Minute Book No. 1," page 624.
- 61) Sandborn-Perris Maps, 1886.
- 62) "Canal Commissioners Report," December 1882, page 41.
- 63) "Lockport Township Minute Book, Highway Commissioners Report," June 27, 1887, page 41.
- 64) Ibid., page 105.
- 65) Sandborn-Perris Maps, 1891.
- 66) Ibid.
- 67) "Canal Commissioners Report," December 1, 1893, page 4.
- 68) Lockport Phoenix, October 1894.
- 69) Ibid., February 1895.
- 70) Sandborn-Perris Maps, 1891.
- 71) Joliet Republican, August 11 and 13, 1895.
- 72) Lockport Phoenix, November 21, 1895

- 73) Ibid., December 5, 1895.
- 74) Putnam, Illinois and Michigan Canal, Appendix 1, pages 161-168.
- 75) Where Trails End, Published by South Cook County Historical Society Volume 3, No. 3, Spring 1876, page 86.
- 76) Lockport Phoenix, October 31, 1895.
- 77) Joliet Daily Republican, December 26, 1896, page 1.
- 78) Sandborn-Perris Maps, 1902.
- 79) Lockport Phoenix, April 29, 1899.
- 80) Will County Courier, June 17, 1899.
- 81) Putnam, Illinois and Michigan Canal, page 115.
- 82) Lockport Phoenix, February 14, 1907.
- 83) Joliet Herald News, Suburban Section, "City of Lockport Marks Anniversary, 1853-1953."
- 84) Will County Courier, April 1908.
- 85) Lockport Phoenix, June 4, 1908, page 1.
- 86) Ibid., September 24, 1908, page 1.
- 87) Risdon, J. L., "Lockport's Story," Texas Star, Spring 1945, page 2.
- 88) Ibid., page 4.
- 89) Lockport Phoenix Advertiser, December 23, 1915, page 1.

Appendix A - Public Landing

Lockport represented a strategic location in the development of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, as the elevation at this point is equal to that of the surface of Lake Michigan. To its south a significant drop takes place and the Des Plaines River (which runs through the length of the valley) breaks into a series of falls and rapids around Joliet. These natural phenomena (providing a large volume of potential hydraulic power), convinced the Canal Commissioners to establish their headquarters here. By 1836 a town was platted with the intention that a settlement of importance and size would develop. A public square was provided and a strip of land lying along the proposed canal was also marked off. This strip, known as the Public Landing, held a central location in the street plan of the village. It was believed that the area would be a focus in the commerce and development of Lockport, providing an open area for commercial and public traffic.

In 1837 the first significant stone building in the County was constructed on the north end of the Public Landing. The structure, built of local limestone, functioned as a supply depot for essential construction materials. With the opening of the canal in 1848 the landing became an important center for agricultural trade. On both its north and south ends large agricultural warehouses eventually sprang up. The canal provided the transportation link which made grain cultivation profitable in the region, and true to the expectations of the canal authorities Lockport became an important grain marketing center. With the development of that center the Public Landing functioned as an open traffic zone in front of the two warehouses.

Smaller business concerns grew along Commerce Street on the east boundary of the landing. Very little evidence of these original structures remains. One stone structure facing onto the street which remains today was initially a livery stable built ca. 1850. The grain merchants occupying the north and south ends of the Public Landing provided groceries, hardware, dry goods and canal supplies as early as 1850.¹

Traffic passing on the canal utilized the Public Landing to a great degree. As the canal made the grain business possible it also provided for the transport of goods into Lockport, making available manufactured goods from the East and agricultural goods from the South. Commodities such as tools, clothing, sugar, molasses and tobacco were shipped via the canal, unloaded at the Public Landing and carried up to the shops along State and Commerce Streets. In addition to this traffic a vigorous business of passenger boats existed. These packet boats plied the canal between Chicago and Peru, Illinois. Regularly scheduled service was available all along the canal. In 1849 an "express" service was offered between Joliet/Lockport and Chicago, making it possible to leave Lockport in the evening, arrive in Chicago the next morning, have a full day for the transaction of business and return the second night.² In this case it appears that the Public Landing served as Lockport's passenger depot.

In 1855 a section of the frame warehouse/store at the south end of the Public Landing was removed to Commerce Street. In its place a large limestone structure was built, providing a balance to the stone warehouse at the opposite

end of the landing.³ For at least the next twenty-five years these two large buildings served as the commercial and industrial centers of the town. By the end of 1855 a plank road was completed from Plainfield into Lockport, allowing for a major increase of grain shipments from western Will and Kendall Counties. It is significant to note that the plank road bridged the canal at Ninth Street, crossing the Public Landing at its mid-point.

The intense activity on and around the Public Landing led to many attempts to develop it commercially. Although legally canal property, both the Commissioners and the Village had supervisory control and authority over this public space.⁴ During the first ten years of the canal the Village Board drew up a number of leases for parcels on the landing. It appears that petitions for retail or commercial enterprises were discouraged, as the petitions approved were all directly related to canal or transport purposes. In order to discourage permanent occupation of the landing, leasing policies were drawn up for short term arrangements only. One lease granted to a local merchant in February 1854 approves of the occupation of certain public land however, within a prescribed time limitation:

This is to certify that Gaylord and Milks have the permission of the President and trustees of the Village of Lockport to occupy and use until the first day of May next, that portion of the Public Landing lying north of the canal bridge and extending half way from said bridge towards the stone warehouse of George B. Martin for the purpose of building two canal boats which they intend to complete by the first day of May next. If they fail to complete the two canal boats by the first of May they may occupy and use the area until they can be finished at any time previous to the first of June 1854 to complete said boats but for no other purpose whatever.⁵

Although short term leases were granted and enforced, problems were always present with individuals attempting to permanently settle on the landing. Both the Canal Commissioners and the Village Board however were steadfast in their resolve to keep the landing open and public. By 1856 an ordinance was posted to ensure against the permanent development of private interests on the landing:

ORDINANCE: VILLAGE OF LOCKPORT May 5, 1856

FIRST: Ordered by the President and trustees for the Village of Lockport that the street supervisor be required to give notice to each person having property on the Public Landing to remove the same on or before the first of June 1856.

SECOND: After the first day of June 1856 no goods, chattle or other property deposited on the Public Landing shall be permitted to remain on the same for a longer period than five days without permission first obtained from the Street Supervisor.

THIRD: Any person or persons who shall violate this ordinance or any part of the same shall be fined in sum not exceeding \$10.00.⁶

The activities which surrounded the Public Landing changed over time. As the early period was marked by multiple useage, the later period became narrower in its scope. The first major factor involved in that change was the development of the railroad. As early as 1855 the business of packet boats taking passengers to and from Chicago ended. The completion of the rail link between Joliet and Chicago in that year literally terminated that business overnight.⁷ In 1856 the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis railroad obtained its right-of-way through Lockport directly between the Public Landing and Commerce Street. The increase in railroad traffic over the years further discouraged the public from traversing the railroad tracks to the Public Landing. To lessen the annoyance of the passing trains, the Village Board requested the

Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad to construct an eight foot high fence along the east side of its right-of-way, running the length of the Public Landing (between 8th and 10th Streets).⁸ The annoyance and hazard of those tracks also appears to have led to the decline of Commerce Street. The railroad was one of the permanent problems which eventually focused all commercial activity on State Street.

Other major problems developed with the canal itself. The first of these was an engineering development in the early 1870's which changed one major aspect of the canal - its water quality. The impetus for that Engineering change occurred in the late 1860's when the expanding metropolis of Chicago began having a serious waste disposal problem. Sewage, dumped into the Chicago River, was befouling the city's drinking water obtained from Lake Michigan. In order to avoid further contamination a plan was proposed to deepen the channel of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Referred to as the "deep cut," this project resulted in the reversal of the Chicago River, allowing a steady flow of water to run from Lake Michigan through the canal. With the completion of the "deep cut" in 1871, water quality of the river and canal improved slightly in the Chicago area but deteriorated drastically at Lockport. By the late 1870's the problem had become a serious one and numerous towns along the canal requested the Commissioners to take action to alleviate the intolerable condition. In August 1880, the city of Joliet drafted a formal petition to the Commissioners stating that the canal:

causes such an offensive smell that it has become an almost intolerable nuisance to citizens of Joliet and other towns on the line of the canal.

Your petitioners would most respectfully represent that for very much of the time during the last nine years, they have suffered to an extent beyond description from what they had supposed a nuisance caused by the city of Chicago cutting down the Summit level of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and turning its sewage matter, together with all other nastiness, from hence through the Chicago River into the canal....⁹

The stench now associated with the canal was an effective means of discouraging private and retail activity in the area of Commerce Street and the Public Landing.

The final development which led to public abandonment of the landing was the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad's petition to lay an additional set of tracks. The petition (approved by the Village Board in 1873) called for the construction of a new set of rails not only to occupy the west edge of their right-of-way but also to include a significant portion of Commerce Street.¹⁰ At its completion Commerce Street lost its claim as a viable thoroughfare, becoming a narrow inaccessible passageway. Consequently, most business along the street ended as well. The new track further threatened the declining useage of the Public Landing, as crossing those tracks became an arduous and dangerous activity. As a result, the tracks acted as a barrier isolating the Public Landing from the rest of the town. Shortly there after, Norton and Company the largest industrial/commercial concern facing the Public Landing moved its grocery and general store out of the area and on to State Street.

By the mid-1880's useage of the Public Landing was confined to workers on the canal or in the Norton/Gaylord mills. Canal boats could still be seen docked

along the landing but little in the way of commercial activity occurred.¹¹ Despite this neglect no permanent developments either public or private were ever allowed on the Public Landing.

Historically, attempts to settle on this public ground through purchase or preemption were sumarily rejected. One such attempt was documented by William Gooding, Chief Engineer of the I & M Canal, in 1859. Mr. Gooding, responding to a developer's attempt to occupy public canal land near Chicago, writes:

I find by an examination of the original plat of this sub-division, which was made by the Canal Commissioners as early as 1836 that, (the property) was left a vacant space, and what I know to have been the views of said Commissioners in relation to other similar vacant spaces, I have no doubt that it was their intentions to set apart this extra room over and above the width of the street as public ground which should neither be occupied by individuals or the city, but if not used as open ground or a breathing place for the public, as originally intended, it appears to me that there can be no reasonable doubt that it still belongs to the State or the Trustees.¹²

These public 'breathing places' provided by the Canal Commissioners in 1836 are unique. The Commissioners foresaw that the construction of the canal would lead to urban and industrial development along its banks. By laying out public grounds exempt from this development they allowed for the creation of a unique zone. This public land was intended to serve a multi-purpose use, functioning, at one and the same time, as green space, market, loading dock, depot, parking lot, etc. In addition it appears that any commercial or retail activity was acceptable as long as it did not request or require permanent fixture on the landing. Interestingly, the Nation's most successful canal, the Erie Canal, had no public areas to compare to the I & M Canal's Public

Landing. Commercial open zones did exist in the larger towns of Rochester and Albany, but no systematic policy for Public Landings was ever provided for in its construction.¹³

NOTES: Appendix A

- 1) Sandborn-Perris Map, Village of Lockport, 1886; Lockport Telegraph, May 1, 1850.
- 2) Shaw, Economic Development of Joliet, page 101.
- 3) Joliet Republican, April 17, 1875, page 1.
- 4) Village of Lockport, "Minute Book No. 1," page 3, Village Charter, section 4, paragraph 2, February 13, 1853.
- 5) Ibid., page 36.
- 6) Ibid., page 84.
- 7) Shaw, Economic Development of Joliet, page 113.
- 8) Village of Lockport, "Minute Book No. 1," page 74.
- 9) "Canal Commissioners Annual Report," December 1, 1880, page 6.
- 10) Village of Lockport, "Minute Book No. 1," page 335-336.
- 11) The Sandborn-Perris map of 1886 indicated a total of seven structures on Commerce Street facing the Public Landing; three tenement houses, two ice houses and two dwellings.
- 12) William Gooding, personal letters, July 1, 1859, held in the Schauer Collection at the Will County Historical Society, Lockport, Illinois.
- 13) Hellinger, contact with Erie Canal researcher Emily Madden, Livonia, New York, August 1, 1979; and Tod Weseloh, Canal Museum, Syracuse, New York, July 31, 1979.

Appendix B - The Norton Warehouse

The four story limestone building located on the south end of the Public Landing in Lockport represents the last remaining industrial structure of the vast holdings of Norton and Company. Situated on lots one and two of Block ninety the building occupied a strategic location along the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The company's industrial history closely parallels the life cycle of the I & M Canal. During the late 19th century, the Norton mills at Lockport exemplified the industrial and commercial potential of the Canal. Its commerce held preponderance over the village of Lockport, functioning as its major employer and establishing it as an important agricultural processing center in northeastern Illinois. In short, Norton and Company was for many years the barometer of economic well being in Lockport.

To understand the development of the building and its historical importance, a brief history of Norton and Company is in order. Hiram Norton was a man of considerable financial means before his arrival in Lockport. Born in Western New York State in 1799, he lived most of his life in Ontario Province, Canada where he worked for the Canada Stage Company and eventually became its owner. He was elected to the Canadian Parliament and served a total of fourteen years. During this time he served on a Government Commission for the improvement of the St. Lawrence River Canal. In 1838 he came to Illinois at the request of a former business acquaintance, Judge Benjamin Wright, consulting engineer for the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Wright had previously employed the firm of Norton and Steele, (specialists in hydraulic cement) in the construction of the St. Lawrence River Canal. Upon Judge

Wright's appointment as consulting engineer on the I & M Canal, he brought Norton and Steele to Lockport.¹

During construction of the canal Norton negotiated for the water power rights at its most strategic point, Lockport. Obtaining these leases (two in 1853 and one more in 1866) Mr. Norton commenced an industry which would effect the development of Lockport for the next fifty years.

Prior to the completion of the canal, Hiram Norton entered into a business partnership with a Mr. Blackstone as traders of commercial and grocery supplies. It is believed that business was conducted in the State owned stone warehouse at the north end of the Public Landing. The partnership did not succeed and the company sold out in May 1848. Settling his debts from that loss, Hiram Norton reestablished himself in a wood frame warehouse constructed at the south end of the Public Landing. Business prospered at this site and in 1853 the firm of Norton and Company was officially established, with he and his sons (John L. and Lamuel D.) comprising the company.²

Norton saw the potential of the canal and its value in developing the agricultural regions of Will County. The rich, unbroken prairie lands in the region and further westward would soon be the new home of America's largest and most profitable agricultural interest - wheat. In turn, Norton also saw the opportunity for supplying the growing population of the region with needed items made available by the canal. Products from the South such as coffee and sugar, timber products from the North, as well as manufactured goods from the

East were in great demand. Aiding in the development of that market, Norton and Company established Lockport as a center for the purchase and transportation of wheat.

In 1849 the firm purchased their first canal boat to ship grain to the Chicago market. With the increase of commerce at the Public Landing, Norton and Company placed an addition on to their frame warehouse. The Lockport Telegraph made note of the event:

Mr. Norton...has built a large addition to his already very commodious warehouse, consisting of a two story building extending from his warehouse east to Commerce Street, presenting in all a front of one hundred feet on the Public Landing - he intends it for a store, counting room and etc.³

In 1852 the land leased from the Canal Commissioners was formally purchased by Norton and Company. A law enacted in February 1840 allowed for the sale of State owned properties ninety feet along either side of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The bill was enacted during the time of a work stoppage along the canal due to the exhausted State canal budget. The sale of these lands would provide the additional funds necessary for the completion of the canal and payment for the debts accumulated during the first phase of construction. Under this provision, Norton and Company purchased lots one and two in Block ninety. The sale was dated June 19, 1852 with both lots drawing a price of \$1,000.00.⁴

In the same year, Norton and Company began construction of their flouring mill. Located on the west side of the canal, the mill was built on the edge of the hydraulic basin, to which they gained complete water power rights early

in 1853. It utilized the power generated by the drop in water from the hydraulic basin into the Des Plaines River (a drop averaging about 21 feet).⁵ The mill was outfitted with one water turbine which propelled three run of grinding buhrs.⁶ In 1853 the industry on the hydraulic basin was expanded to include a saw and planing mill.

During the year 1855 the wood frame warehouse and store (located on lot one Block ninety) was removed to the east side of Commerce Street and converted into a dwelling.⁷ This was done to make way for the construction of the present limestone warehouse and store which stands at the south end of the Public Landing.

The building, constructed of indigenous limestone stands three stories (with additional half story attic space) high. The dimensions of the building are 100 feet by 100 feet with the main entrances into the structure facing northward on to the Public Landing. Initially, Norton's stone building had a mixed industrial and commercial usage. The large size of the building dominated the area of the Public Landing.

The industrial section (which occupies 70 ft. of the 100 foot frontage) functioned as a warehouse. The building has a flat roof which originally possessed an elevator penthouse. It has a very plain bracketed limestone cornice. The attic story windows also have plain limestone lintels (currently those windows are bricked in). The walls of the structure are dotted in a horizontal pattern with cast iron truss ties. Two limestone pilasters frame

this industrial section of the building. At the street level two large arched portals allowed for the circulation of goods into and out of the building. On the west side of the structure, three similar arched portals faced on to the canal to accept and convey goods to and from passing transport boats. At the time of the building's construction a pedestrian suspension bridge was placed on the west side of the warehouse, spanning the canal and connecting the warehouse with the industries on the hydraulic basin.

The commercial section of the structure (encompassing 30 feet of the 100 foot frontage) was initially a grocery and canal supplies store. Originally, the building had a store front of fluted, cast iron square columns, capped with a heavy one and one-half foot high limestone block lintel. The upper level has a two bay double window arrangement with projecting limestone lintels. This arrangement is divided by a stone pilaster. The commercial section itself is also framed by two limestone pilasters. This section of the building has been altered at the street level. A large entry way has been created (20 feet by 16 feet) for truck traffic. At the upper level the windows have been covered with a translucent corrugated green fiber-glass panels.

The building had a multi-purpose use. Modeled after the wood frame structure built before it, its primary use remained the accomodation of grain produced by the farms in the area. In 1855 a plankroad into Lockport had just been completed. The road, running westward into the rich grain producing prairie lands around Plainfield, Illinois, resulted in an expanded grain trade at Lockport. The increased volume of harvested grain which arrived in wagons via

this road as well as the shipments by canal boats was sold for cash or bartered in the vicinity of the Public Landing.

Competition on the grain exchange market in Lockport was stiff as three large buying firms existed. George Gaylord and Co., George B. Martin, and Norton and Company all had successful grain businesses along the canal. The volume of grain passing through Lockport was large enough however to make all three companies successful in their time. The 1860 industrial census indicated an annual volume of 100,000 bushels of wheat for Norton and Company alone.⁸

In order to attract the greatest trade, Norton and Company provided numerous benefits for farmers who sold their wheat to his firm. Advertisements were printed in local newspapers of the day described the advantages of trading at his "Custom Mill" in Lockport. Milling work was done at all hours of the day or night, with overnight accommodations provided for customers with teams, free of charge. The surest strategy for attracting customers however was to offer the highest prices for agricultural produce. In a newspaper advertisement dated 1855, Norton and Company print their fixed intention of always paying the highest premiums for wheat:

Being determined to establish and maintain a reputation
for the best flour manufactured in Illinois (Norton & Co.)
will at all times pay Chicago prices for the best quality
of wheat.⁹

By the late 1850's Norton and Company established themselves in every aspect of the grain business. They were responsible for purchase, storage, milling, transport and marketing of grain. This systematic approach to the business proved extremely successful, making them one of the largest grain processors

in Illinois. By 1861 Norton and Company was handling grain by the trainload, some days purchasing and shipping as many as twenty five thousand bushels. As many as ten canal boats were constantly in service, taking grain from Lockport to Chicago where it was transferred directly on to Lake carriers bound for eastern markets.¹⁰

The grain warehouse functioned as one unit in this comprehensive system. It served as the central purchase depot for grain arriving into the Norton Complex. The warehouse utilized the most modern grainary equipment including the "dump" which could unload a wagon in two to five minutes. This "dump" was a tilt bed on which wagons were driven, their wheels chained down and the wagon was then tipped up allowing the grain to flow out and into a bin located on the floor below. A steam powered bucket-chain transferred the grain from the basement to the elevators. In order to be milled, the grain was deposited (via a conveyor located at the second storey landing on the buildings west side) into canal boats and carried over to the flouring mill on the hydraulic basin. Completing the process this freshly milled flour was then placed in barrels and loaded on canal boats bound for Chicago.

Unlike the flouring and planing mills on the hydraulic basin, which acted solely in an industrial capacity, the warehouse attracted a commercial and retail life. Trade was negotiated here for shipments both large and small entering into Norton and Company. Cash was paid at all times for produce of smaller volume than grain, such as white beans, grass seed, pork, butter and eggs. An important element stimulating this activity was the company store.

adjacent to the warehouse. Begun in 1850 the store became an integral part of the commercial activities of Norton and Company. It sold local produce, milled lumber, and products acquired from transport on the canal. Products from the Mississippi River trade were regularly passing through Lockport and these quickly became available in the store. An advertisement dated November 1854 presented a list of newly arrived goods from the South:¹¹

SUGAR.....	300 lbs.
CLARIFIED SUGAR.....	200 gal.
MOLASSES.....	250 gal.
LARD OIL.....	200 lbs.
RIO COFFEE.....	150 lbs.
JAVA COFFEE.....	150 lbs.

manufactured goods from the East were also sold. Store clients covered a wide range of professions, including canal haulers, farmers, Lockport residents and the canal authorities who purchased needed equipment and supplies.

By the mid-1860's Norton and Company had grown to a substantial size. Dun and Bradstreet credit reports estimated the company worth at 75,000 to 100,000 dollars.¹² Major growth and expansion however, did not occur until the beginning of the 1870's. In 1872 the "deep cut" was completed on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. This "deep cut" provided an unobstructed flow of water from Lake Michigan to Lockport, significantly increasing the water power potential along the canal. Norton and Company, owners of all water power rights at Lockport, benefited greatly from this improvement. In the same year they constructed a paper mill on the hydraulic basin, which turned out five tons of straw board paper daily in its first year of operation.¹³ The number of grinding stones in the flouring mill increased from three to eleven. The grain warehouse was also altered with the addition of at least

two new grain elevators, bringing the total number of elevators to seven major sets. Newly installed was a March patented grain dryer, with a capacity for kiln drying ten thousand bushels daily. This machinery was operated by a new turbine powered by falling water from the canal.¹⁴

Of the numerous changes which occurred in the warehouse in the 1870's one of the more interesting concerns the incorporation of this water powered machinery. In anticipation of the increased water power from the deep cut, Norton and Company decided to take water directly from the canal, using it to generate power at their warehouse. Because there was no significant drop in the vicinity, an artificial drop was created. This was accomplished by digging a tunnel under the canal westward a sufficient distance to the Des Plaines River. Water was then taken from the canal, dropped through a wheel pit located in the basement of the warehouse, carried beneath the canal and then discharged on its west side into the Des Plaines River. The drop was approximately 15' feet, with the dimensions of the tunnel being 165 feet long, 15 feet wide and 8 feet to the top of the arch.¹⁵

The introduction of water power greatly expanded the energy potential at the warehouse. Prior to the completion of the tunnel, the warehouse machinery relied solely on steam power. The existing machinery was converted to water power in 1871.¹⁶ In addition, it appears that new machinery was placed in the warehouse at that time, including five run of grinding wheels. With the installation of these wheels, located on the canal side of the building, a corn grinding operation commenced.¹⁷

Corn cultivation was increasing annually in Illinois. By the late 1860's the dominance of wheat had moved westward with the opening of lands in Iowa and Minnesota. United States Agricultural Census reports for Will County in 1870 present the marked shift away from wheat and an increasing interest in the cultivation of corn and oats. By 1878 the interest in wheat growing in Northern Illinois had clearly ended. Will County statistics for that year document the farmers committment to corn and oat production:¹⁸

	ACRES	BUSHELS
CORN.....	132,332	4,324,432
WINTER WHEAT.....	112	2,330
SPRING WHEAT.....	1,684	23,069
OATS.....	60,796	2,415,712

Given these statistics, the installation of corn processing equipment in the Norton warehouse was a realistic adaptation to local agricultural change.

The flouring mills on the hydraulic basin however continued to process wheat. The operation was expanded to include a total of twenty-eight run of stone, significantly increasing production. Local publications of the day indicate that the flouring mill of Norton and Company had become the largest operation of that kind in Illinois.

At full capacity the mills will turn out from seven to eight hundred barrels of flour per day. The Winter Wheat used at these mills is brought from the southern part of the State, while the Spring Wheat is from the west. In connection is a cooper shop, which employs about 35 hands making the barrels used in the mills.¹⁹

The expanded facility had an estimated processing capacity of eight hundred to nine hundred thousand bushels of wheat annually. The United States Industrial Census documented the amount of production at Norton and Company's mill during

the twelve month period, June 1, 1879 to May 31, 1880, at an even one million bushels of wheat.²⁰

With the death of Hiram Norton in April 1875, company assets were transferred to his sons, John L. and Lemuel D. Norton. Under their directorship Norton and Company continued to prosper. The late 1870's was a time of sound business development for the company and great wealth for both brothers. At the close of the decade John L. constructed one of the largest homes in Lockport, located at Tenth and Hamilton Streets. An English architect was commissioned to design the home and attendant gardens, which included three fountains, four greenhouses and a lawn tennis court.²¹ In 1882 John L.

Norton stated that company assets in Lockport consisted of a flour mill and packing house worth one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, a three quarter interest in a paper mill in which the actual investment was two hundred thousand dollars, three thousand square feet of industrial property and all water power leaseage on the canal at this site. Included also were several business blocks and dwellings.²²

Aside from these holdings, interests were expanded outside of the Lockport area to include the Oriental Mills of Chicago, located at Randolph and Canal Streets. In 1881 the Lockport Wire Fence Co. was established with Lemuel D. Norton as President of the firm. The Wilmington Paper Co. of Wilmington, Illinois was incorporated in 1887. Dun and Bradstreet credit reports placed an estimated worth on that business of one hundred and ten thousand dollars and shows John L. Norton to be the principal stockholder. John L. Norton's

holdings also included the Economy Light and Power Co. at Joliet, of which he was President and principal stockholder, the Western Stone Co., a quarrying operation with numerous sites in the Des Plaines River Valley, and a significant interest in a paper company and hydro-electric plant in the Niagara Falls region in New York.

Norton and Company with its central office at Village of Lockport extended well beyond the confines of Will County and northern Illinois. Business transacted in many places in the United States and Canada. The Will County Courier defined the volume and scope of Norton and Company:

TO THE PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC

We understand that Messrs. Norton & Co. received on Saturday last, by rail, from near St. Louis Minnesota 15 car loads of wheat for their mills; that they shipped the same day, ten tons of paper to San Francisco, California, several cars of grain east, fifteen hundred barrels of flour and corn-meal to Montreal and different points in New England. This though not unusual, is a fair day's work.

So widespread has the reputation of their flour become that they are unable to supply the demand and though pushing their two mills (here and in Chicago) to their full capacity, day and night, they are thousands of barrels behind in their orders.

The people of Will County would hardly suppose that this unassuming firm was extending its business from ocean to ocean and carrying their trade into the dominions of Great Britian; but such is the fact.²³

Unlike the prosperous years of the 1880's, the decade of the 1890's was a difficult period for the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Norton and Company and consequently Lockport. Problems on the I & M Canal started well before 1890. In 1879 the waterway began running at a deficit, as annual operating costs exceeded the amount of tolls collected. In 1882 a maximum of annual tonnage

of the canal was reached. After that point it declined steadily under the stiff competition of the railroads. By the late 1880's tonnage was dropping at an annual average rate of 100,000 tons a year.²⁴

Serious financial difficulties did not occur until early in 1893. On a national scale it was a year of economic disaster. By the end of 1893 it was found that shipments on the I & M Canal had dropped by a quarter of a million tons over the previous year. The Canal Commissioners in their annual report cited the cause of the decline:

The financial situation due to the panic of last summer paralyzed the building trades and caused a cessation of working the quarries upon which the canal is largely dependant.²⁵

When the tolls for 1893 were counted it was found that they amounted to \$38,000.00, or eleven thousand dollars less than any other year in the history of the canal.²⁶

A depression in farm prices also accompanied the "panic." By the end of the year prices had fallen to their lowest levels in more than thirty years. Corn sold on the Chicago market at 17 cents per bushel, while oats were at 13 cents per bushel and wheat sold for 48 cents per bushel. Lockport, being a major grain center for the area, suffered greatly from this depression. Editorials in the local papers attempted to re-instate confidence in their readers. The Lockport Phoenix wrote in hope of a brighter future at the opening of the New

Year, 1894. The editorial believed that, although current times were difficult:

There is no reason for the people of Lockport to feel discouraged. The outlook for a fairly prosperous 1894 is good.²⁷

The effect of the depression on Norton and Company during the first year was not an immediately crippling one. The mills continued to produce flour, corn meal and straw board products. Profits, however, were seriously effected. One indication of that can be seen in the declining wages of Norton and Company employees. In late 1893 the company's wire mill, located south of the warehouse, closed for a time because of the depression. Lockport newspapers reported on its opening in January 1894 and announced the reduction in wages.

When the wire mill started again, wages would be reduced to eighty-five cents a day.²⁸

Fear that wages would also be reduced at the Norton flour and paper mills spawned numerous rumors among Lockport's inhabitants. The Lockport Phoenix, adding credence to those fears, printed a short statement in their January 11, 1894 edition.

A report was in circulation the early part of the week to the effect that wages for common labor and been reduced at the Straw Board Mill to seventy-five cents a day...²⁹

Such rumors eventually proved true. In response, workers at the Straw Board Mill went out on strike in the late Spring of the following year. Their demands for a raise in pay were met with passive resistance by the management. Those workers participating in the strike were told by the superintendent of the mill that any increase was impossible, as a raise in pay

would only result in the shutting down of the entire mill. They were asked to tolerate the lowering of wages until better times for the company returned.³⁰

Those better times never came for Norton and Company. On December 26, 1896 the company went into receivership. The cause of the failure was indicated to be excessive speculation on the part of Lemuel D. Norton. Later evidence also implicated John L. Norton, who was said to have lost heavily on his investment in the paper mill and hydro-electric plant in Niagara Falls, New York. These losses, suffered in the early part of the nineties, were being financed by the Illinois National Bank. In the summer of 1896 the bank failed, ending this necessary line of credit. Unable to pay their debts, Norton and Company had no other alternative than to declare itself insolvent. Chicago Title and Trust Incorporated, acting as legal receiver, took charge of the company's entire assets including the flour mill, warehouse, grain elevators, electric light plant, business structures and attendant property.

The news of the failure caused a great stir in the village of Lockport. On the morning of the twenty-sixth the milling operations, warehouses and retail stores owned by Norton and Company were locked tight until a full assessment was made by the legal receiver. In the meantime many of Lockport's citizens faced unemployment. Lockport on the whole felt uneasy about the failure. The extent of that apprehension, however, was proportionate to their personal investment in the company. John L. Norton had extensive financial dealings with the farmers and businessmen in and around Lockport. For many years he

had conducted unchartered savings institutions, extending credit and paying interest on deposits left with him. Until the failure, his notes of credit were honored unquestionably at all banks in the area.³¹ It was said that more than half of the population in Lockport and surrounding townships held money in Norton's savings bank with farmers the most heavily invested. On the day of the failure the bank closed. A newspaper report described the scene in front of John L. Norton's office at the corner of Ninth and State Street:

An excited group of residents and country people congregated in front of Mr. Norton's office this morning. The most of them were depositors of credit and were anxiously awaiting information that might be given out. There appeared to be a general expression of sympathy on the part of everybody and the older ones appeared confident that the creditors would not lose anything through "Honest John Norton."³²

When the assessment was completed by Chicago Title and Trust, arrangements were made to reopen the mill, the warehouse and retail facilities of Norton and Company. Assets however were frozen until the company could extract itself from its financial difficulties.

The mills which once prospered because of the water power available from the I & M Canal now began to suffer from it. The annual drop in tonnage and revenues over the past ten years began to seriously effect the operation of the canal. By 1895 gross expenditures were double the amount of tolls collected.³³ Given these annual insufficiencies, basic maintenance and repairs were neglected. The opening of the Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900 further handicapped the Illinois and Michigan Canal as water levels could no longer be stabilized. This lack of adequate water to drive the turbines hampered production in the mills and added to the already difficult financial state of Norton and Company.

By 1902 the flour mill located on the hydraulic basin had closed. The Straw Board plant however, remained open and the grain warehouse was expanded and altered to contain an oat meal mill. The mill, with sixty-five bins and a two hundred thousand bushel capacity, continued to operate on water power. It was sectioned into processing areas with the first floor housing seven run of grinding stone, two bolting chests, two separators and one oat clipper. The upper floors contained various separators, clippers and reels.³⁴

With the completion of the Calumet Sag Channel in 1907, the I&M Canal was cut in two between Lockport and Chicago. This effectively terminated any transport between those two points and in turn guaranteed an eventual end of the whole canal. In February of the same year, with its financial losses never fully regained, Norton and Company permanently ceased its operations at Lockport.³⁵

The citizens of Lockport again anxiously awaited the outcome of this financial crisis. Those who had money with Norton and Company in 1896 were given stock in the firm according to their individual investment. At the time of the company's final collapse that stock was given a redeemable value of one per cent.³⁶

Under the receivership of American Trust and Savings Bank the property was sold to Michael Fitzpatrick in October 1908. Sandborn-Perris maps for 1909 indicate that the mills and warehouse previously held by Norton and Company were not in operation. The following year the I&M canal became almost

completely inoperative in Lockport, consequently all water power leases were terminated by the Canal Commissioners at that site. In early 1911 the properties (including the warehouse and hydraulic mills) were sold to the Northern Illinois Cereal Company.

The company reopened the warehouse focusing its operation on the milling of oats. In the reorganization, the energy used in the mill was changed from water power to steam. Steam was generated in Plant No. 2 (located on what was the hydraulic basin). To transfer that steam a pipe was layed underground from Plant No. 2 through the race tunnel under the canal and into the oat mill. The grain elevators at the warehouse were also changed, with their capacity sharply decreased to 65,000 bushels.³⁷

The first fifty years of this century saw the greatest physical change in Norton and Company's holdings as one industrial structure after another was abandoned, or torn down. In November 1916, a fire destroyed the shafting mill and machine shop directly behind the stone warehouse. The Cereal Company replaced it with a three story brick structure soon after. The area of the hydraulic basin saw the greatest change. In 1910, with the cessation of water power leases on the canal at Lockport, the basin was no longer needed. The 1926 Sandborn-Perris map indicated the basin had been filled in by that date. It also indicated that the paper mill had been totally destroyed, apparently by fire. The Northern Illinois Cereal Company continued to use parts of the original flour mill (located on the basin) as a steam generating plant, grain storage warehouse and feed mill.

The warehouse on the east side of the canal continued to be actively used as an oatmeal mill. During the early 1920's a vehicular bridge replaced the pedestrian suspension bridge across the canal at the north west corner of the warehouse. It served as a link between the Cereal Company's holdings on the east and west side of the canal. The bridge has since been removed.

In November 1950, the stone warehouse and remaining structures on the west side of the canal were sold to the Kellogg Corporation.³⁸ They owned the property for only a brief period; until April 1953. It was sometime near that sale date that a major change occurred in the stone warehouse. The timber floor joists which divided the interior into at least four separate floors were removed. This major structural change resulted in the creation of a huge open space inside the industrial section of the building, running from the ground floor to the roof.

Although the Northern Illinois Cereal and Kellogg Companies employed many of Lockport's citizens, their impact on the life of the town has been minimal compared to the days of Norton and Company. There has been no other family in Lockport who possessed such wealth and power. Realizing the dominance and extent of their industrial holdings is important in understanding the development of the town; past and present. The History of Will County, published in 1878, made a statement about the company's founder which remains true today:

Hiram Norton was one of the most enterprising men the town of Lockport has known, and did more in his day, perhaps, for the building-up of the place than any other man...The evidence of his works are still seen and felt by those who survive him.³⁹

NOTES: Appendix B

- 1) Woodruff, History of Will County, pages 305-306.
- 2) Joliet Republication, April 13, 1875. Dun and Bradstreet Credit Reports, Norton and Company, Volume 229, page 43.
- 3) Lockport Telegraph, April 6, 1850.
- 4) Chicago Title and Trust Company, Property Index file for Block 90, Lockport, City of.
- 5) Canal Commissioners Annual Report, December 1, 1872 Appendix A, page 38-41.
- 6) Joliet Republican, April 13, 1875.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) U.S.Census Industrial Schedule, Will County, Illinois.
- 9) Joliet Signal, January 2, 1855.
- 10) Shaw, Economic History of Joliet, pages 38-41.
- 11) Lockport Telegraph, November 1854.
- 12) Dun and Bradstreet, Volume 229, page 220.
- 13) Will County Courier, July 1874.
- 14) Illustated Atlas of Will County, 1873.
- 15) HAER recording, June 1979.
- 16) Joliet Republican, 17 December 1870, page 2.
- 17) Woodruff, History of Will County, page 435.
- 18) Ibid., page 346.
- 19) Ibid., page 435.
- 20) U.S.Census, Industrial Schedule, Will County 1880.
- 21) 1891 Sandborn-Perris Maps.
- 22) Dun and Bradstreet Credit Reports, Volume 230, page 446.
- 23) Will County Courier, May 20, 1874, page 4.

- 24) Putnam, Illinois and Michigan Canal, Appendix 1 pages 162-163.
- 25) Illinois and Michigan Canal Commissioners Annual Report, December 1, 1893, page 4.
- 26) Ibid.
- 27) Lockport Phoenix, January 18, 1894, page 1.
- 28) Ibid., January 11 1894, page 3.
- 29) Ibid.
- 30) Ibid., June 6, 1895.
- 31) Joliet Daily Republican, December 26, 1896.
- 32) Ibid.
- 33) Putman, Illinois and Michigan Canal, Appendix I, pages 162-163.
- 34) Sandborn-Perris Maps, 1902.
- 35) Lockport Phoenix Advertiser, February 14, 1907.
- 36) Bruce Cheadle (oral history) Lockport, July 26, 1979.
- 37) Sanborn-Perris Maps, 1926.
- 38) Chicago Title and Trust Property Index file, Block 90, Lockport, Illinois.
- 39) Woodruff, Will County History, page 421.

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and the Illinois and Michigan Canal
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Illinois

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